



Testimony by Gail Coppage

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Board of Regents for Higher Education
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Advancement Committee
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Senators Cassano and Boucher, Representatives Willis and LeGeyt, thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on several bills on your agenda today. For the record, my name is Gail Coppage and I am the Director of Innovation and Outreach for the Board of Regents (BOR) for Higher Education, the governing body for the 17 state colleges and universities that make up the C SCU system. I will be speaking today on five bills in agenda order.

Senate Bill 400, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Manufacturing and Technology Workforce

The continued growth and advancement of the BOR's new Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, replicated from the successful model at Asnuntuck Community College is currently in its second full year of operation. At the direction of and with funding provided by the General Assembly, the Board of Regents has found an accelerated manufacturing technology education model that works and is industry supported.

At this time, we are working to incorporate industry-recognized credentials into the existing programming, grow the successful internship relationships with industry, create new opportunities for shared resources with the technical high school system and grow the new manufacturing apprenticeship model across our four institutions.

We respectfully request that we be allowed to continue to build upon and expand this successful program, and not divert resources into a parallel program.

House Bill 5362, An Act Targeting State Financial Aid to Support Technical Training

The BOR supports HB 5362 provided that additional dollars are above and beyond the existing allocation in financial aid found through the Governor's Scholarship Program. The funding mechanism is unclear.

We agree that many of our non-credit students currently taking coursework and/or specific vocational educational and training programs resulting in a credential are in need of financial aid to support industry training. Not all students have the ability to receive workforce investment act funding through one of five regional Workforce Investment Board regions.

As all funding will be provided to students attending a BOR institution and all data will be submitted by the BOR to OHE, we are requesting that the legislature add language that allows for such a program to be established in consultation with the Board of Regents.

House Bill 5493, An Act Requiring a State-Wide Plan to Provide Education, Training and Job Placement in Emerging Industries

The BOR appreciates the continued interest and support of the legislature in understanding and further guiding our efforts to better support our current and future students, especially those

students graduating from high school and moving to a postsecondary education in one of our twelve community colleges.

The BOR recently created a state-wide task force for the express purposes of further understanding, defining and creating a model systemic approach to early college education, in concert with the SDE. A consultant was hired jointly between the BOR and SDE to provide an analysis and review of existing state-wide program models as well as creating a standardized, systemic early college model across the system of twelve community colleges. Similar discussions regarding definitions, early model programs, best approaches, review of other state models, review of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) standards and the highly successful UCONN Early College Education program are occurring at this moment, with the goal of introducing at least six early college model programs within the system next year.

Since the BOR process is underway and the group is making impressive strides in developing possible models for expansion of both contextualized learning and early college experiences, we believe that we can welcome CETC into this ongoing process, and that doing so will create a more rounded dialogue.

House Bill 5495, An Act Establishing an Accelerated Certificates Program

This bill suggests an aggressive timeline for the establishment of new programming that is intended to serve a population of individuals that will require a significant level of support as they work through an accelerated program of learning. The BOR is concerned about the ability to provide a meaningful credential within twelve months to a student that is simultaneously taking courses in adult literacy, developmental level English and math, and technical training.

At the very least, the development of such a program requires significant collaboration between agencies and industry groups, consultation with faculty, and additional funding to provide students with an affordable cost structure given the amount of support we would anticipate providing.

The Board appreciates the need to increase the number of working adults with meaningful credentials, but believes that HB 5495 requires reexamination and more significant input from the Board and SDE with regard to the feasibility and goals in starting such an ambitious program.

House Bill 5435, An Act Requiring an Evaluation of Certificate Programs Authorized by the Board of Regents for Higher Education

The Board did not take the opportunity to comment on HB 5435 when it was officially heard on March 4, but, as the governing body for the community colleges and state university system responsible for program approval and oversight of its 17 institutions, the Board strongly believes that it should undertake any evaluations of its certificate programs. We would be happy to have further discussion with regard to the form such evaluation may take.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you may have.